

Lauren, you will always be part of Team Babin and an honorary member of the Babin family. I am very proud of you, and I am very proud to have been part of your history. Thank you for a job well done.

God bless.

THIRTEEN SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN FIRST 3 MONTHS OF 2023

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Mrs. TRAHAN) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. TRAHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart and a level of anger shared by millions of Americans, millions of parents.

On Monday, three 9-year-old children and three adults were gunned down at the Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee. The shooter, armed with not one but two assault weapons, broke into the school and stole the lives of innocent people simply going about their day.

For my colleagues across the aisle not keeping track, the massacre was the 130th mass shooting of the year. It was the 13th school shooting of 2023, and that is only if you count the time someone was injured or killed when a gun went off on school grounds.

Thirteen times over the past 3 months, parents have dropped their children at the bus stop or at school. They told them they loved them, to have a great day, and that they would see them when they got home. Then, they got the call that every parent fears, the one that wakes us up in the middle of the night.

Thirteen times this year, parents in a city or town hung up that phone or turned off their TV and raced to their children's school.

Thirteen times parents waited behind police tape, hoping to hear something about their son or daughter.

Madam Speaker, how many more times are we going to let this happen?

How many more times can my colleagues across the aisle tweet their thoughts and prayers but say that their hands are tied on gun safety legislation?

How many more Christmas cards of Members of Congress holding AR-15s do we need to see while students in their classrooms practice active shooter drills?

School shooting after school shooting, Congress has had the opportunity to act.

We have the legislation to ban assault weapons, like the rifles used in Nashville on Monday.

We have legislation to require background checks on every gun purchase so firearms aren't falling into the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

We have legislation to prevent someone convicted of a hate crime from being able to purchase a gun.

What this Chamber doesn't have enough of is willpower. It doesn't have

enough courage to act. This inaction is shameful, and as a parent, it is disgusting.

Apparently, the Republican leadership in the House thinks that the biggest issue facing our children today is the books in their library because while we have yet to take up a bill to stop school shootings, the number one killer of our children in America, this Chamber passed a bill last week to politicize our kids' education—a bill, by the way, that they didn't even have unanimous Republican support for.

I mean, what are we doing here?

I have to go home tomorrow and look my 8-year-old daughter in her eyes, 1 week before she turns 9, and tell her that three more kids were shot and killed in their classroom, but mama can't get half of her colleagues in the Congress to care enough to do anything about it.

How can anyone in this Chamber be okay with telling their kids or their grandkids that?

How can you see the kids who are taking pictures right outside on the Capitol steps and do nothing to prevent their school from being next?

How can we call ourselves the greatest country in the world when its elected leaders sit on their hands while children are murdered hiding beneath their desks?

We can't, and to those of you deflecting or giving up, you should be ashamed.

Madam Speaker, I implore you to go back to your party's leadership, go back to Speaker MCCARTHY and tell him that we need to end the gun violence epidemic that is plaguing our children. Do it before it is too late for another school, for another family.

GRIEVING FOR TENNESSEE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I come to the House floor today with a heavy and grieving heart for my home State of Tennessee. No one should ever have to endure what the Covenant School community has gone through.

I know that my colleagues here today understand how difficult the situation is, and your prayers for our community are deeply appreciated as we mourn this senseless loss of life.

I want to take a moment to remember the victims of this horrible attack: three schoolchildren, William Kinney, Evelyn Dieckhaus, Hallie Scruggs, all age 9; and three staff members, Cynthia Peak, a substitute teacher, Mike Hill, a custodian, and Covenant School Headmaster Katherine Koonce.

All the lives were precious.

Mike Hill, for example, worked for the Covenant School for 15 years. He not only served the school and the church, but he learned every student's name. He was the father of seven children.

Cynthia Peak was a beloved wife and mother.

Dr. Katherine Koonce was a dedicated and passionate educator, who always put children first.

Words cannot describe how hard it is to lose children, three precious 9-year-old children, one of whom was the daughter of the lead pastor of the Covenant Presbyterian Church. These children never had a chance to grow up, and my heart is completely broken for these families. I cannot imagine.

Nothing can be said to dull the pain of this tragedy. Tennesseans, and Americans worldwide, are praying and grieving with this Covenant community.

Madam Speaker, I also commend all the first responders that were on the scene and the medical professionals that treated victims at Vanderbilt Medical Center.

I especially commend the five Metro Nashville Police officers who arrived at the school first. These men ran toward the sound of the gunfire instead of away from it. Their bravery absolutely saved lives.

The two officers that shot and killed, with a gun, the shooter, Officers Rex Engelbert and Michael Collazo, are heroes. They did not hesitate, and because of their quick response, lives were saved.

Though unspeakable grief holds Nashville in its grasp, I honor the incredible heroism of Metro Nashville's first responders. Instinct and courage took over in the face of evil and fear. I join Tennesseans in expressing my sincere gratitude for their quick response.

The outpouring of love means the world to the Covenant community and all Tennesseans.

WE ARE FAILING OUR YOUTH, AND THEY KNOW IT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCANLON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCANLON. Madam Speaker, we are failing our youth, and they know it.

I rise today to share the voices of our children, the voices of those who attend schools where, once again this week, young lives were lost to gun violence that Congress refuses to prevent.

My office runs a Congressional Youth Cabinet, a nonpartisan program that gives high school students the opportunity to learn about our government and share their views. We meet every couple of months during the school year, and they select topics for discussion at each meeting.

Last weekend, the topic was gun violence. The next day, six people were slaughtered in yet another school shooting. Three of them were only 9 years old.

As I struggled to find words to convey, once again, the urgency that Congress act, I turned to the students in my youth cabinet. I asked them what

they would say if they had the opportunity to address Congress. Here are their voices, the voices of America's youth.

Claire: "It is terrifying to see another school shooting on the news, and even scarier that this is an almost normal thing. As students, we just want to be safe to learn and grow. . . . I feel, and I have heard this from a lot of kids, I can't walk down the hall without looking for a safe place to hide in case something happens. It really messes with your head."

Zeyan: "Gun violence feels normalized and ingrained. My school had a lockdown drill today, yet afterward, we went on with our day like the need for a lockdown drill is trivial and not disturbing. I hope legislators understand how drastically gun violence can alter students' daily lives and thoughts."

Tyler: "It is really hard to stay optimistic as a young person when we see these tragedies again and again."

Lindsay: "All those kids did today was go to school on a beautiful Monday morning. But instead of making paper cutouts of Easter bunnies or painting eggs, they were shot and murdered. [That] school is a private Christian school. Prayer takes place in every single one of those classrooms, including where third graders were shot to death. Prayers did not stop our children [from being slaughtered with] guns. A lock on the door did not stop the killer from coming in. Legislators . . . can stop this."

Several observed that easy access to guns is a major driver of school shootings.

Kiona said: "These situations happen so frequently, it makes me question how easy it is to get a firearm or assault weapon in this country. We could have prevented more of these situations."

Quin: "For me, gun violence is personal. Lives like ours are on the line. On the news, time and time again, I see my own communities attacked, from the Lunar New Year Monterey Park mass shooting to the Club Q nightclub shooting. Our schools are not safe. It is clear that gun violence targets vulnerable people of color and LGBTQ+ people. . . . Guns are the leading cause of death among children and teens."

Noah: "We need to stop treating shootings like isolated events and think of them as part of a whole. It wasn't just one person with a gun today in Nashville or in Colorado Springs or in Uvalde. It was a web of corporate greed, insufficient legislation, and hatred."

Eliot: "I am a senior in high school, and I have been directly affected by four separate instances of gun violence in the past year. I was in lockdown . . . during the Highland Park shooting . . . at the same time my close friend was hiding in a church [during an active shooter situation] at a concert. . . . Our school recently lost a classmate to gun violence, and we had a lockdown because of a threat of a shooting. . . .

The lack of action is alienating my generation. We are supposed to be the 'future of our democracy.' Our experiences of gun violence are more common than instances of legislative progress. We are told we are supposed to save democracy, to save the planet, but no one is saving us, and we notice that."

This last line really sticks with me. Our kids are being asked to put our democracy and our collective future first, but their country and their Representatives in Congress are not putting them first.

It breaks my heart to hear the fear, anger, cynicism, and hopelessness in our children's voices. We are failing our youth, and they know it.

Doing nothing is unacceptable. If you don't have any solutions, then you need to get out of their way.

Our kids deserve action now.

RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF JONES HOOK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the retirement of Mr. Jones Hooks, the longest serving executive director of the Jekyll Island Authority.

Mr. Hooks' 15 years of service to the people of Jekyll Island will never be forgotten. When he became the executive director in 2008, the island was in economic trouble, with many of its facilities operating at a deficit.

To fix this problem, and many others plaguing the island, the authorities on Jekyll proposed multiple goals, such as revitalizing Jekyll's facilities, establishing a credible conservation effort, and partnering with the private sector on certain efforts the Jekyll Island Authority could not handle alone.

Mr. Hooks achieved every goal put forth by island leadership. Thanks to his efforts and leadership, Jekyll Island is a thriving community, a hallmark of conservation efforts, a tourism location enjoyed by many, and much more.

I thank Mr. Hooks, once again, for his service, and I hope he has a restful retirement.

RECOGNIZING 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF BELFAST/GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement that brought an end to 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland.

The conflict, known as The Troubles, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people. The conflict saw families, friends, and neighbors turn on each other. It saw political discourse become replaced by violence and bloodshed.

Despite the viciousness and length of the conflict, all parties involved, with U.S. diplomatic support, managed to come to an agreement to end it.

□ 1030

Now, 25 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the Emerald

Isle remains more peaceful and more prosperous than before the historic agreement. I applaud the commitment to peace by leaders on both sides of the Irish Sea.

I also applaud the recent Windsor Framework, which managed to preserve the principles of the Good Friday Agreement while also holding true to the requirements of Brexit.

As Americans, we should look to the Good Friday Agreement as hope that despite our differences, we can come together to solve problems, and we can work together as one team to make our country great.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF CHARLENE SAUNDERS

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of Charlene Saunders, a loving mother, wife, and educator in the Savannah community.

Charlene and her husband, Bill, moved to Savannah in 1958 to establish the athletic program at the Savannah Country Day School.

During her 31 years at Country Day, Charlene served as the head coach of girls' basketball, girls' track, and the cheerleading team, and she oversaw the PE department.

While Charlene's teams amassed winning records, she is remembered for her strong bond with her athletes and as a model of integrity, grace, spirit, and grit. In 1982, Saunders Gym was named in her honor.

Charlene and Bill Saunders were fixtures at all student events and were held in such high regard by the student body that they received two yearbook dedications and were also named the honorable homecoming king and queen.

Her legacy continues to impact generations of students. She will be dearly missed by all who knew her.

RECOGNIZING LEROY CHAPMAN, JR.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Leroy Chapman, Jr., for being named the new editor-in-chief at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

A veteran of the Navy, he has been a journalist for 28 years, originally coming from South Carolina. Leroy currently serves as the managing editor and has been with the AJC since 2011.

Over the course of his 27-year career, he has also worked as a columnist and editorial writer, a business reporter, and a college sports reporter.

During his career, he has helped cover a number of high-profile stories, including the 2020 election results and the court cases of teachers and administrators charged in the Atlanta Public Schools cheating scandal.

Leroy will be the AJC's first Black editor-in-chief in the newspaper's 155-year history.

I congratulate Leroy on this wonderful honor. I look forward to his continued success at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

By the way, this comes from another Leroy.